

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 470

RC 019 271

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TITLE Teaching Cultural Values and Building Self-Esteem.
PUB DATE Mar 93
NOTE 21p.; B.A. Requirements, NAES College/Menominee Study Site.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS American Indian Culture; *American Indian Education; American Indians; *Cultural Education; Elementary School Students; Grade 1; *Native Language Instruction; Primary Education; Self Esteem; Student Attitudes; Summer Programs; *Tribally Controlled Education; *Values Education
IDENTIFIERS Culturally Relevant Curriculum; *Cultural Values; *Menominee (Tribe)

ABSTRACT

The Menominee Pride Program was a whole-language summer program developed for first grade students at the Menominee Tribal School in Keshena, Wisconsin. The purpose of the program was to increase students' self-esteem by imparting Native values, culture, and language. The curriculum focused on three legends of the Menominee culture and emphasized culturally relevant values identified by Menominee community members. Program staff received training regarding key elements of Menominee culture. This program came about in response to a lack of Native language and culture programs and to an educational process that lowers the self-esteem of Native students by isolating them from their elders in restrictive, enclosed environments. This paper suggests that tribal school systems must enhance tribal sovereignty by ensuring that cultural and spiritual needs are being addressed through integration of Native history, language, and culture. The Menominee Pride Program was successful in increasing academic skills, improving student interaction, and improving student attitudes toward school. Appendices include a list of values for Menominee schools, a Menominee value statement stressing the importance of family bonding, and the Menominee Pledge. (LP)

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TEACHING CULTURAL VALUES AND BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Karen Washinawatok
Submitted in partial
fulfillment of the
requirements for
Bachelor of Arts Degree

March 1993

N.A.E.S. College/Menominee Study Site



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The people who shared values and are responsible for the wisdom and knowledge of today are our ancestors. Without the help of our Grandfathers and Grandmothers, we would not have our land, our heritage and our lanage. Their love and teachings have brought us this point in our lives.

My grandparents, Hymie & Theresa Wescott imparted their cultural expertise as well as the respect they shared with others and myself. For them and my parents,, my family and all who continue the traditional ways, a special thanks for our unique values and identity.

Waewaenen ketaenen (a heartfelt thanks) to Carol Dodge for her continued support as well as the assistance of Lillian Nelson, Lynn Skenandore, Dave Grignon, Carol Nepton, Alice Azure and Melody Kobs. Without their help this paper could not have been completed.

A special thanks to NAES College for being an important part of the Menominee community.

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INTRODUCTION

The Menominee Pride Program was a summer school enrichment experiment held in conjunction with the Menominee Indian School District (MISD) summer school program. Although the programs shared facilities, the Pride component was administered separately and the Pride staff was predominantly non-MISD. Pride was a whole language, integrated learning project which focused on 3 legends of the Menominee culture. For six weeks, the participants - approximately 72 first graders, were immersed in hands-on culture related activities to promote learning and build self-esteem. The summer school Pride Program was a success in part due to the committed staff from the training of classroom teachers to the dedicated support of all program participants.

Having taught the language and culture for the last nine years, I see a need for strengthening our children's values through culturally-related curriculum. Others have done research on the impact of learning native language to enhance a child's self-esteem.

For example, the following comments of Brassard and Szaraniec reinforce this research, "early instruction in the native language promotes learning . . . In addition, it appears to strengthen the self-esteem of the children as members of their native culture."¹ Language instruction provides the students with native teachers and culturally-relevant curricular materials to understand their Menominee heritage, while learning values and pride in themselves.

"There is evidence, that culturally relevant curricular materials (or the lack of them) have a significant effect on attitudes toward reading, children's self-esteem, their production of oral language, achievement in basic skills, and reading comprehension. Dodge and Johnson (1975) managed to overcome this problem with Menominee children when they used Menominee cultural reading materials to teach basic reading skills. Their experimental group showed impressive gains over the control group which did not use the materials."

In addition to integrating language and culture in the classroom, the Menominee Values-Based Program prepared for the summer school program by training staff in the key elements of the Menominee culture as identified by a community needs assessment. The results of the survey determined which values would be stressed. For a complete list of values identified see Appendix I.

This paper will show why our Menominee language and culture must taught in a school setting in such a way as to compare and combine the best of both the Menominees' values as well as the goodness of today's current non-Indian multicultural society.

I. TRADITION

Menominee values reflect the preservation of our past and current attitudes towards the unique heritage of our people. Recently, the Menominee Tribal Planning Dept., shared their surveyed list of values with community and educational personnel. These values, combined with community and family gatherings which reinforce our traditional ways will be the cultural knowledge we will impart to the future generations. This way of life is based on legends, songs and a language as unique as ourselves. Becoming familiar with the cultural and social ways of ourselves as indigenous beings will also teach us of the differences and similarities which we share with others.

Our woodland environment is reflected in our crafts, art, storytelling and stewardship to Mother Earth and all her creatures. We come to know the trees, plants, birds, stars, animals and the universe as our family we gain a respect for each other. Domination and destruction have no place in our world of harmony and sacredness, we must treat all forms of life respectfully. An important value of Nature is it's gift of itself to us as equals. Yet exploitation and pollution are two real problems faced by Menominees today. Greediness and selfish motives are non-traditional alternatives of today's community. The Circle of Life interconnects all of our Mother's creation; our brothers and sisters - our RELATIONS.

Long ago we were given the gifts of watching, listening and learning. The elders taught the younger simply by doing. We

encouraged our little ones to explore and integrated learning with survival whether we were gathering wild rice, sturgeon or maple syrup. Children sat among adults through the cold winter months actively listening to stories retold countless generations.

Today's youth are isolated from their families and elders unless relatives are employed within the educational facilities. Our young are expected to perform as equals of other cultural or ethnic backgrounds in standardized tests. They are required to be obedient in a restrictive environment designed to control large groups; not to accommodate individuals strengths and weaknesses, or allow extra attention to those with personal, emotional, and social difficulties sometimes encountered in the school settings.

Academic education has become a foreign way of life preferred by Menominee families already lost to tradition or ignorant of language and cultural appreciation. Today's educational system is controlled and administered by non-Menominees as well as native people who don't understand or support cultural curriculum priorities.

Cultural deprivation is a reality faced by today's Menominee youth. For change to occur, all factions of the Reservation policy-makers must sincerely and strongly demand culturally-related priorities in all aspects of community life.

II. FAMILY & BELONGING

The concept of family is synonymous with belonging to the Native people. Our family is not nuclear but extended to include clans and community. Traditionalists consider all life forms as relatives. We respect our totems or clan animals as ancestors. We teach our young about Mother Earth, Father Sky, Grandmother, South, Grandfather Rock, etc. Recognition of the spiritual quality is reinforced in our language. Words are animate or inanimate with respect to their living or non-living existence. Elders teach us of our roles as guardians of our language and traditional ways. This responsibility is to learn and pass on what is important to our identity.

The Menominee Pride Program recognized the importance of belonging by building the summer school enhancement curriculum based on values identified by the Menominee people themselves.

From whole language curriculum development based on a Menominee legend to an early morning greeting circle, participants were bonding to the heritage and the summer school family. Our Monday morning circles reminded us of our interdependence. It also displayed the wonderful togetherness we shared. Harold Katchenago would smudge and speak about the importance of living with cultural ways and the meaning of what we were doing at that time - whether it was sage, cedar or other gifts. This activity was held outdoors, weather-permitting. It enhanced the beginning of our week together. It also assured us of our family and belonging.

"The strong family bonds will become strong tribal bonds... Later in life, we will better understand the closeness that we have with our family and relatives and our tribe because of what we learned in our youth." See Appendix II for Value Statement # 10.

Although today's educational process removes us from our elders, places us in restrictive, enclosed environments with teachers trained in non-Native theories. From insisting on formal titles before last names to displaying non-traditional values, our teachers inadvertently create confusion and our children begin to fail academically due to non-adaptive behaviors.

Physical behavior of professionals whether it is body language, facial expression or verbal messages; combined with negative cultural attitudes are perceived by our children via low self-esteem or negative self-image. As Sanders says,

"conflict contributes to the development of a negative self-image, and to examine how the failure to achieve academically is a function of this negative self-concept. Although each tribe is different because of tribal structure and geography, there are prevailing basic, consistent values and attitudes held by American Indians that transcend and cut across tribes ... They have not wanted, nor do they want, to relinquish their rich, cultural identities or their value systems and become assimilated into the mainstream society of non-American Indians."⁴

Assimilation has been attempted in many forms throughout history. We are a unique people with unique values. We know that our children are our most important resources along with our language, traditions and distinct heritage.

III. SELF-ESTEEM

We all feel good about ourselves when our self-worth is recognized. We need to maintain a holistic balance within our minds, bodies and spirits. With this thought in mind, educators can approach self-confidence through teaching cultural values. Doing our best to make positive contributions will prevent low self-esteem.

Our Menominee Pledge recited in many classrooms each school day reminds us to be somebody worthwhile and think about what we're doing to make a better place to live. See Appendix III for the complete Pledge with an explanation of it's meaning.

Recitation combined with the Menominee Pledge instills a basic understanding of our sovereignty. Each classroom should have a Menominee Nation Flag as well as an eagle staff or replica to honor our native heritage.

During summer school the children sang a greeting song each day known as the Posoh Song. This song was composed by a Menominee several years ago. It teaches our young the importance of greeting others, the importance of song, while encouraging one of their favorite activities - singing. Each day the Kindergarten classes request it before ending a Menominee Language class, if we were unable to sing the song earlier.

The Menominee Pledge and the Posoh Song were an important part of the Pride Program curriculum as they built self-esteem in the program participants. Self-esteem is the core of our existence as is our culture.

Our spirituality explains the purpose of our existence. For our Native people, religion is a way of life. Our individual journey in life requires many teachings and many strengths. To know what is proper and expected of oneself often requires leadership abilities. We teach our children about leadership, bravery and liberation as important values.

The Menominee Summer Pride Program explains equality or liberation as "Experiencing one's self as having the same value and rights as all other human beings in such a way that one is set free to be one's self and to free others to be themselves. This is the critical consciousness of the value of being a human being."

Our self concept is not fully realized until we are aware of our identity, speaking our native language, aware of cultural differences and are proud of who we are. Our little ones are taught their language as early as pre-school level to enhance values awareness and appreciation. The importance of teaching language and culture cannot be understated.

The link between past and present and future is of paramount value regardless of what we do in our daily occupations. Language is the means which we need to maintain our identities. As we learn about ourselves and our past, we must also gain an understanding of other cultures. Knowing similarities and differences exist ensures a multiethnic perspective - wholesome and appropriate to today's societal diversity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Today's educational system lacks strong programs of native language and culture. According to a Menominee County Human Service employee, Menominee County is number one in juvenile delinquency and number one in rising incidents of violent crimes committed. Our schools could impact these alarming statistics by simply strengthening the Menominee Language Programs. Teaching our language and culture would stress the importance of traditional values. It would "more effectively enhance the sovereignty of Indian nations and fully implement their initiatives to improve and enhance the education of their young people while maintaining their cultural integrity." (White House Conference on Indian Education - WHCIE)

Respecting our "Native American culture and language in the educational process of Indian children at an early age (will) enhance the level of pride and self-esteem in learning." (WHCIE) Our responsibility to our elders, our children and ourselves is to maintain our unique status as sovereign nations. But "it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to meet the educational needs of the American Indian/Alaska Natives and the right of American Indian/Alaska Native parents, tribes and communities to determine how these needs will be met." (WHCIE)

We must demand and monitor our school systems to ensure that our cultural and spiritual needs are being addressed. Integration of native history, language and culture as a part of the curriculum was one of many recommendations of the WHCIE which was held in

January, 1992: "The purpose of the WHCIE was to develop recommendations for the improvement of educational programs to make the programs more relevant to the needs of Indians." This document was forwarded to the President of the United States in accordance with Public Law 100-297. Additional directives resulting from the WHCIE are as follows:

- * Therefore, be it resolved, that alternative assessment instruments that are culturally appropriate be used to assess performance of American Indian/Alaska Native Children in addition to non-biased standardized tests.
- * Allocate new funds for research and development of culturally-appropriate assessment for American Indian/Alaska Native (on-off reservation) for all categories of appropriate services and placements.
- * Promote the development of State plans for Indian/Alaska Native education which support the adoption and implementation of culturally relevant programs by public schools.
- * Deliver these services from a cultural, spiritual and community perspective
- * Tribal members would be consulted to develop codes and standards which reflect the cultural values of the respective tribes.

We must demand and monitor our school systems to ensure that our cultural and spiritual needs are being addressed. We can build the self-esteem of our children if we continue to teach cultural values!

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of forming the Menominee Indian School District was to maintain and promote language and cultural teachings. The current Menominee school system has language and culture programs.

However, this new approach of integrated teaching known as the Menominee Pride Program has enabled classroom teachers to incorporate language and culture in a whole language, thematic teaching manner. "Classed were provided to over sixty Tribal and Menominee Indian School District teachers to reveal the importance of teaching based upon the culture and values of the community." (MITOW)

Cultural differences are causing Native communities to reflect upon variations in other areas like the judicial system. The following testifies to this fact:

"One basic problem that prevails is that because the laws of the tribes are based on a different value system from the dominant society, there will always be differences seen by the outside (non-Indians). Because tribes and/or bands are communal, the laws reflect the values of the community and not necessarily individual rights. This is not to say that individual rights are being overlooked but individual's interest must interact with the community and it is the community norms and laws that will be dominant and enforced." (Sovereignty Forum II).

Even the State of Wisconsin is recommending change as noted by the Wisconsin Education Association Council newsletter, "WEAC is concerned about the lack of knowledge regarding Wisconsin American Indian history and treaty rights. The Council believes the tensions which grip our state must be dealt with through education. Thus

the Council encourages programs which foster respect for Wisconsin Indian culture and treaty rights."

Educational reform is the ultimate goal to change and improve or strengthen our current cultural programs. Specifically, the basis for understanding is for educators to know the key elements of the culture, as suggested by Chuck Cokain in a "recent publication. He says this will help non-community personnel to facilitate a total resource base for students. A resource base, as he notes, should include all aspects of the area from local agencies staff to elders. The Menominee Model Summer Program stressed cooperative learning as well as interactive learning. Three adults per classroom was the rule which also accounted for the bonding of students and staff in conjunction with cultural teachings/activities.

The Menominee Pride Program increased academic skills, improved student interaction on a positive basis as there were minimal disciplinary issues with a final marked positive attitude towards school at the program's end. Like the students, I'm excited to continue on with Menominee Pride '93!

NOTES

1. Brassard and Szaraniec, "Promoting Early School Achievement in American Indian Children," School Psychology Journal, 1983: p. 97.
2. Brassard and Szaraniec: p. 93.
3. Danielle Sanders, "Cultural Conflicts: An Important Factor in the Academic Failures of American Indian Students," Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 1987:p. 87. '.

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APPENDIX I
RECOMMENDED LIST OF VALUES FOR MENOMINEE
SCHOOLS

GOAL VALUES

Family/Belonging: The people to whom one feels primary bonds of relationship and acceptance and the place of dwelling of one's parents.

Equality/Liberation: Experiencing one's self as having the same value and rights as all other human beings in such a way that one is set free to be one's self and to free others to be themselves. This is the critical consciousness of the value of being human.

Human Dignity: Consciousness of the basic right of every human being to have respect and to have her/his basic needs met that will allow her/him the opportunity to develop her/his maximum potential.

Ritual/Communication: Skills and use of liturgy and the arts as a communication medium for raising critical consciousness of such themes as world social conditions and awareness of the transcendent.

(Self) Competence/Confidence: Realistic and objective confidence that one has the skills to achieve in the world of work and to feel that those skills are a positive contribution.

Self Worth: The knowledge that when those one respects and esteems really know her/his, they will affirm that she/he is worthy of that respect.

Service/Vocation: To be motivated to use one's unique gifts and skills to contribute to society through one's occupation, business, profession or calling.

Source: "Menominee Indian Tribe Culture Diversity Consultation"

Patrick Coggins, Workshop Facilitator

6/6/92

Value Statement Number Ten

"Our older children watch out for their younger brothers and sisters."

Caring for one another begins with our family and extends to the general community. The inter-dependance of the family members on one another grows into a tribal support system that strengthened the Anishinabe in all, *gaa kii naa* (gah key nah) manners of living. The Anishinabe rarely felt alone, *wii ne taa* (wee nay tah) because of these attachments and dependencies that begin in childhood, *aa bii noo jii win* (ah bee new jee win).

The Anishinabe *aabiinoojii* is cared for by *gaakiinaa* members of the family. *Saayeyag* and *miiseyag* are an important part of that network of care. Eventually they will be adults, *nii taa wi gi win ag* (nee tah wih gee win ugh) together. The strong family bonds that are developed will become strong tribal bonds. It is important that the Anishinabe *aabiinoojiiyag* learn to feel that sense of affection that comes from being together with relatives and friends for this will be carried over to when they become *niitaawigiwinag*.

Anishinabe *aabiinoojiiyag* should be reminded that they will be the *niitaawigiwinag* that will be responsible for the next generation of *aabiinoojiiyag*. They will learn this responsibility by taking care of the younger *saayeyag* and *miiseyag*. In essence, they will practice to be *niitaawigiwinag* of *wabang*. It is also a lesson at problem solving and so there is a reliance on older *saayeyag* and *miiseyag* for help. Many strong bonds are created between *saayeyag* and *miiseyag* during these early learning years of *aabiinoojiwin*. Many of our family allegiances are created during this time and they continue throughout our lives.

Older *aabiinoojii* may not understand the full meaning behind having to care for their younger *saayeyag* and *miiseyag*. They may see this as a task or burden of babysitting. But caring for them is a very important part of our training as *niitaawigiwinag*. We may not understand the bonding that is happening until we are away from it. Later in life, we will better understand the closeness that we have with our family and relatives and our tribe because of what we learned in our youth.

We are told many things that we may not understand at the moment, but as we grow older, we will find this learning and advice very valuable. We will eventually learn to trust the advice and wisdom of those who have lived longer than we have. In that way, we will learn from our elders and one day become the examples for the next generation.

SOURCE: "Life Circle of my Relatives", Parenting Program Curriculum,

Lac du Flambeau Resource Center, Lac du Flambeau, WI

APPENDIX III

Menominee Pledge

I dedicate my efforts of this day:	I (name) will do my best today
to my own bright future:	so I can make something of myself
the honor of those who love me:	so my parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and teachers are proud of me, and
and the dignity and progress: of the Menominee Nation	so I can grow up and become a leader and helper of the Menominee people.

"I dedicate my efforts of this day
to my own bright future
the honor of those who love me
and the dignity and progress
of the Menominee Nation."

SOURCE: Values-Based Handout, Planning Dept., Menominee Indian Tribe
of WI, Keshena, WI